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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused August 5 news coverage on Taitung County Magistrate Kuang Li-chen, who returned to Taiwan Monday in the midst of controversy for being away on a trip to Europe while Taitung County was being pounded by a major typhoon last week; on the attack in Xinjiang Province just four days before the start of the Beijing Olympics; and on the death of Nobel Prize-winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn Sunday. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on page eight reading "Ma Ying-jeou: [Taiwan] Is Likely to Participate in the World Health Assembly Next Year." In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed piece in the pro-unification "United Daily News" urged the Ma administration not to leave Taiwan's relations with the United States unattended while seeking to stabilize cross-strait relations. End summary.

"Do Not Leave Taiwan-U.S. Relations Unattended While Seeking to Stabilize Cross-Strait Relations"

Professor Edward Chen of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/5):

"...In the wake of the July visits to the United States by [Taiwan's] national security officials and the legislative delegation, respectively, to explain Taiwan's arms procurement position and mainland Chinese policy, it was reported that the State Department is expected to inform Congress of the U.S. government's interest in selling eight weapons systems to Taiwan. U.S. President George W. Bush even proactively told Asian media representatives in the White House in late July that he is 'very pleased' with the current state of cross-strait relations. Such a development indicated that the earlier reports alleging that Washington threatened to freeze its arms sales [to Taiwan] were nothing but a strategic reflection of Washington's displeasure with the Blue camp's blocking of the U.S. arms sales over the previous years and Washington's discontent over the way the Ma Ying-jeou administration cold-shouldered the United States.

"The impression that the Bush administration is feeling cold-shouldered by the Ma administration should be an error of carelessness [on Taiwan's side] while it seeks proactively to improve cross-strait relations. Ma's national security team is certainly aware that [Taiwan] relies almost entirely on the United States or follows Washington's lead in terms of the island's strategic planning, weapons purchases, market access, negotiations over WTO issues, talks about the free trade agreement, its participation in the international organizations, as well as realization of the diplomatic truce across the Taiwan Strait. Even when it comes to the strategic goal of 'stabilizing cross-strait [relations] and rebuilding mutual trust,' put forward recently by the Ma administration, Taiwan sought to put equal emphasis on cross-strait [relations] as well as its relations with the United States. ..."

YOUNG